

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Ten Acres of Wetlands Restored



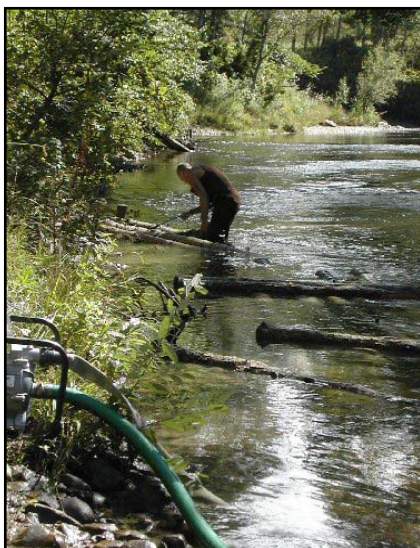
On August 24, Biologists Susan Wells and Heather Enterline inspected the construction of two wetland restorations in Ogemaw County, Michigan. The restorations were completed on August 27 and restored approximately 10 acres of aquatic habitat on private land. The projects were funded by the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and in kind services provided by the landowner, Bob Walt. The inspection was conducted while showcasing the Alpena FRO Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program to Service personnel from the Washington D.C. and East Lansing Offices. Nicole Wandervaer from the

Division of Hatcheries in Washington D.C. was on a detail with the East Lansing Ecological Services Field Office (ELFO). Wanderaer and Stephanie Millsap from the ELFO spent much of the detail visiting fishery programs and facilities.

This project restored 10 acres of wetland habitat for migratory birds, amphibians, and enhanced water quality for adjacent watersheds by reducing sediment loads. Many partners were involved with this project including the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the local property owners.

Susan Wells

Boyne River Fish Habitat Restoration



A three hundred fifty-five foot stretch of the Boyne River in Charlevoix County, Michigan was improved for fisheries habitat the week of August 30. The Service, in conjunction with the Conservation Resource Alliance (a Resource, Conservation and Development Office out of Traverse City, MI) and Boyne USA (a large resort owner), teamed up to improve the Boyne River on Boyne USA property with the addition of large woody debris. The woody debris (trees) were secured with cables into the river substrate to form floating mats in the pool areas of the river. The woody mats provide cover and habitat for local populations of salmon, steelhead and northern pike. Due to historic logging in Northern Michigan, very few of the rivers and streams have adequate amounts of large woody debris in the stream channel. Addition of this woody substrate creates a healthier aquatic

ecosystem for the Boyne River. Service funding was provided by Fish Habitat Restoration funds, administered by the Partners for Fish and Wildlife (Partners) Program. Alpena FRO Biologist and Partners Coordinator Heather Enterline supervised the project in conjunction with Conservation Resource Alliance staff.

Large woody debris provides channel diversity, a food source for macroinvertebrates, cover for fisheries populations, and shades river water from the warming effects of the sun. This project is consistent with the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" element of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Heather Enterline

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Alpena FRO Completes 2004 Fishery Independent Lake Whitefish Survey



From August 2 to August 30 staff from the Alpena Fisheries Resource Office (FRO) completed a fishery independent lake whitefish survey in 1836 Treaty waters of northern Lake Huron. Staff involved included Treaty Unit Coordinator Aaron Woldt, Fishery Biologist Adam Kowalski, Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski, Fishery Biologist Anjie Bowen, Fishery Biologist Susan Wells, and Project Leader Jerry McClain. The goal of this survey was to collect fishery independent abundance and biological data of

lake whitefish stocks in treaty waters for use in statistical-catch-at-age (SCAA) population models that are updated annually to determine harvest regulation guidelines (HRG's) for tribal commercial fishers in 1836 Treaty waters. As dictated in the 2000 Consent Decree, the Modeling Subcommittee (MSC) of the Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC) annually collects data and conducts model runs to determine lake whitefish HRG's for 5 management units in northern Lake Huron. In 2002, the MSC identified fishery independent lake whitefish data as a critical information need. This survey meets the data need identified by the MSC.

In August using the Alpena FRO 30' research vessel and staff, 18 overnight, variable mesh gill net sets were conducted at randomly selected sites in lake whitefish management unit 4 (Alpena to Presque Isle) and lake whitefish management unit 5 (Presque Isle to Hammond Bay). Nets set included standard bottom set survey nets as well as legged nets with a 3' gap near the substrate. All lake whitefish collected were measured for length, weighed, checked for lamprey wounds, sexed, assessed for maturity and visceral fat content, and sampled for ageing structures. Non-target fish species were worked up in a similar manner as well.

In 2004 the Alpena FRO evaluated 1) whether legged nets increased lake whitefish catch rates and decreased lake trout bycatch and 2) whether executing the survey in July and August affected lake whitefish and lake trout catch rates. In previous years, this survey was conducted in mid-May to mid-June. Preliminary analyses show that lake whitefish catch rates were similar between bottom-set and legged nets; however, lake trout catch rates were significantly lower in

legged nets than in bottom sets. Average lake whitefish and lake trout catch rates showed no significant differences between June (N=6 sets), July (N=8), and August (N=14).

This survey will continue annually and be tailored to meet needs identified by the MSC. All data from this survey will be compiled, maintained, and analyzed at the Alpena FRO.

Data collected in this survey will improve the accuracy of current population models being used to set lake whitefish harvest guidelines in 1836 Treaty waters of northern Lake Huron. Good model output is essential to sound and sustainable management of the lake whitefish resource in northern Lake Huron, and lake whitefish is the central component to the Native American commercial fisheries in 1836 Treaty waters. Harvest limits allow lake whitefish fisheries to be executed while still protecting the biological integrity of the stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species while meeting the needs of tribal communities.

Aaron Woldt

ANS Vessel Prepared for Fall Work



During the month of August, Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski readied the *R/V Sentinel*, Alpena FRO's new vessel, for trawling. The *R/V Sentinel* was built for Alpena FRO staff this past winter and was used all summer in the St. Clair River to track and capture lake sturgeon. The vessel was specifically designed to pull a bottom trawl during annual monitoring and control surveys of ruffe and goby. Upon receiving the *Sentinel* back from the St. Clair system, Koproski began outfitting the necessary equipment and gear for

trawling activities. Approximately 250' of new cable was put on the trawling winch, and the cable was marked at 20' intervals. In addition, Fishery Biologists Koproski, Adam Kowalski, and Anjanette Bowen conducted test trawls in Thunder Bay to ensure that the vessel adequately deployed and fished existing station trawls. The vessel and trawling equipment worked properly. During the month of September, station staff will use the *R/V Sentinel* to conduct its annual aquatic nuisance species (ANS) monitoring and control surveys.

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) pose a serious threat to native fish species. ANS species typically out-compete native fish for food and preferred habitat, and in the absence of native predators their abundance can grow very quickly. The *R/V Sentinel* will allow staff at the Alpena FRO to monitor the expansion and document the introduction of new ANS species in Lake Huron. This work helps fulfill the Service's goal of preventing the establishment and spread of aquatic nuisance species and will provide for native aquatic species conservation and management – an element of the Service's Fishery Program Vision for the Future.

Scott Koproski

Sampling Gear Readied for Fall Aquatic Nuisance Species Surveys in Lake Huron

In August, Alpena FRO readied sampling gear for upcoming aquatic nuisance species surveys in Lake Huron and the St. Marys River. Biologist Anjanette Bowen repaired trawls and prepared

trawling bridles and otter boards needed for bottom trawling surveys. Trawling surveys are conducted to detect new populations of Eurasian ruffe and round goby at shipping ports and waterways, and will begin in early September in the St. Marys River and continue throughout the month in Lake Huron.

Preparations were also made for a survey to detect the presence of round goby on northern Lake Huron reefs historically used for spawning by lake trout. The reefs historically were three of the most productive lake trout reefs in Lake Huron according to commercial harvest records and areas nearby are currently used for lake trout restoration (stocking). Egg feeding goby are considered a threat to lake trout production and their presence may impact lake trout restoration efforts. Setlines and traplines were prepared for sampling to be conducted in early September. Preparations will allow for the detection and monitoring of aquatic nuisance species in Lake Huron - which will protect native species and allow for Aquatic Species Conservation and Management - a goal of the Service's Fisheries Vision for the Future.

Anjanette Bowen

Leadership in Science and Technology

Adult Lake Sturgeon Telemetry Research Continues on the St. Clair River



Alpena FRO Fishery Biologist James Boase working with Bruce Manny (USGS Great Lakes Science Center in Ann Arbor, MI) and Mike Thomas (Michigan DNR Lake St. Clair Research Station in Mt. Clemens, MI) continue to follow the movement patterns of adult lake sturgeon captured in the Upper St. Clair River near Port Huron, Michigan. The primary focus of the research is to identify habitats used by lake sturgeon during spawning and where the fish move to post spawning. Adult lake sturgeon were implanted with ultrasonic

transmitters and followed using underwater listening gear.

In the spring of 2002 eight adult lake sturgeon were captured with baited setlines and implanted with ultrasonic transmitters. Six fish moved out into Lake Huron following spawning while the remaining two fish were tracked moving down river into the North Channel of the St. Clair River. The transmitters used for the research have a battery life of 36 months and as a result allowed information to be collected throughout 2003 and 2004. Throughout 2003 and 2004 the two fish that moved down river were tracked between the North Channel and Lake St. Clair.

In the spring of 2004 six more adult lake sturgeon were implanted at the spawning reef near Port Huron. Consistent with the findings in 2002, most of the fish (four of the six) moved out into Lake Huron post spawning while two fish moved down river and again into the North Channel. Of those two fish, one had been previously captured by the Michigan DNR in 2001. The fish had been captured on a spawning reef located in the North Channel near the town of Algonac, MI, marked with an external Monel tag, and then released back into the river.



In August 2004 the same fish was captured for a third time on a baited set line. Capturing the fish a third time allowed us to examine the surgery location where the ultrasonic transmitter had been implanted three months earlier and also collect information about changes in weight and length. The overall health of the fish was very good and the surgery location was healing nicely.

This effort is just one example of the Service working with states and other federal agencies to achieve common Great Lakes management objectives. Maintaining these collaborative relationships allows for the most efficient use of limited human and fiscal resources, ultimately resulting in faster restoration of lake sturgeon in the Great Lakes.

This collaborative effort provided an opportunity for the Service to expand its network of both governmental and non-governmental partners. Working with other governmental agencies and commercial fishers has been beneficial in aiding the ongoing lake sturgeon research that the Alpena FRO is currently involved with in the St. Clair River. Maintaining and the continued expansion of these networks is key to the success of the overall interagency effort in restoring lake sturgeon throughout the Great Lakes basin and meeting goals of the Service's Fishery Vision for the Future for Aquatic Species Conservation and Management.

James Boase

Partnerships and Accountability

Dedication of New USGS Great Lakes Research Vessel



Ceremonies to dedicate a new U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) research vessel were held in Cheboygan, MI on August 12. Alpena FRO Project Leader McClain attended the celebration along with Rick Westerhof and Clarice Beckner of the Jordan River NFH. Ceremonies included comments from the mayor of Cheboygan, representatives from district offices of Senator Carl Levin, Senator Debbie Stabenow and Congressman Bart Stupak, as well as USGS personnel. Following the comments, participants traveled to the vessel base for the

official christening of the *R/V Sturgeon* and a short maiden voyage of the vessel. Addition of the *R/V Sturgeon* to the Great Lakes will greatly enhance forage assessment efforts in Lakes Michigan and Huron.

Interagency coordination is critical to fishery management in the Great Lakes and is consistent with the Partnerships and Accountability, and Aquatic Species Conservation and Management elements of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future. Service support for USGS

programs and operations will enhance relations between these two federal agencies and enhance our respective efforts to protect and restore Great Lakes fisheries.

Jerry McClain

Workforce Management

Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Workforce Planning Team Meets



Alpena FRO Project Leader McClain participated in a Workforce Planning Team meeting in Denver, Colorado August 4-6. The team, consisting of representatives from Regions 1-9, is working with a private consulting firm, Federal Management Partners (FMP) to help develop a strategy to align the Service's Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Program (FWMA) to better meet current and future workloads. The August meeting reviewed results of a national survey of FWMA staff developed by FMP and developed a series of draft recommendations that will be provided to the directorate in September. Workforce planning has been identified by the Office of Management and Budget as an essential task for all federal agencies to improve efficiency and provide for improved fiscal accountability. McClain represents Region 3 on the team.

Development and retention of an effective and efficient workforce is critical to the current and future operations of the Service's Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance program. Planning efforts such as this are consistent with the Workforce Management priority of the Service's Fisheries Vision for the Future and are critical for the agency to address the increasing concerns for the nation's aquatic resources.

Jerry McClain

Mississippi MOICC Course



From August 16-20, 2004 Fishery Biologist Adam Kowalski helped teach a Motorboat Operator Instructor Certification Course (MOICC) held at Gulf Islands National Seashore (GINS) in Biloxi, Mississippi. Other instructors for the course were Todd Clark (GINS park ranger), Jill Kinney (GINS park ranger), Bruce Hasson (Federal Law Enforcement Training Center instructor), and Bonnie Foist (Everglades National Park ranger). This course is designed to teach students to be a Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) instructor. During the course students gave classroom and field presentations, taught portions of an MOCC, learned how to set up the on-the-water courses,

learned DOI boating policy, and were shown how to teach all portions of an MOCC. There was also an on-the-water portion of the course where students instructed other students to operate and maneuver a vessel with an MOICC instructor on board. Students were given a practical exam comprised of knot tying, boating maneuvers, trailering a vessel, and emergency rescue procedures. Students were graded on their ability to perform the task as well as their ability to instruct another student with the task. There were 17 students in the class including two students from Region 3—Tom Charles (Cypress Creek NWR) and Brian Pember (Upper Mississippi River NWR).

As a result of this course, 17 new MOCC instructors were trained, including two in Region 3. This outcome increases our Region's ability to ensure that all employees who operate motorboats are properly trained to do so. Teaching MOICC courses is consistent with the Service's goal to maintain and support an adequately-sized, strategically positioned workforce with state-of-art training, equipment, and technologies in their career fields.

Adam Kowalski

Public Use

Lake Sturgeon Movement Study Presented at the AFS Meeting in Madison, WI

Fishery Biologist James Boase traveled to Madison, WI to attend the 134th Annual American Fisheries Society Meeting. Boase was an invited speaker at the Sturgeon Population Rehabilitation and Management Symposium and gave a presentation titled "Movements of Lake Sturgeon in the Huron/Erie Corridor." The presentation was a compilation of interagency lake sturgeon mark-recapture and telemetry studies from 1995 through 2004 and was a comprehensive look at movement patterns of lake sturgeon stocks throughout Lakes Huron, St. Clair, and Erie and their connecting waterways. Partner data from Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, University of Michigan, Central Michigan University and U.S. Geological Survey were combined with Alpena FRO data for the analysis. This comprehensive examination of movement patterns suggests that because lake sturgeon routinely move across state and international management boundaries, more consistent management policies are needed for restoration of this species.

Approximately 100 researchers and policy makers from the US and Canada attended the meeting. The symposium provided an excellent opportunity to demonstrate how Alpena FRO is working with state and federal biologists, recreational anglers, and commercial fishers from both Canada and the US to better manage remaining lake sturgeon stocks.

This presentation provided an excellent opportunity to explain to the research community the Service's mission and efforts to restore native fish in the Great Lakes and how agencies managing species like lake sturgeon must work together if restoration is going to be successful. The benefits of native species restoration was clearly defined and explained. The meeting was also an excellent outreach opportunity.

James Boase